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HEGEMONIC GRAVITY AND PLURALISTIC UTOPIA: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO INTERNATIONALIZATION IN ANTHROPOLOGY¹

Benoît de L'Estoile²

Universalism' is, according to standard accounts (e.g. Merton 1973), one of the cardinal values of science. In principle, all of us agree that "science knows no boundaries". In that sense, 'scientific internationalism' is a shared value. However, the common rhetoric of universalism and internationalism may conceal under the same clothe quite different situations in a game where all players are not equal. This begins with inequalities between languages that virtually write off the map large portions of the world's anthropological literature. The international circulation of ideas does not suppress power relations, but may itself have the effect of constructing and reinforcing hierarchies, both internationally and within national spaces.

Reflections on non-hegemonic traditions in anthropology frequently take the form of presentations of the field in one or other national context. Thus we have a series of highly interesting accounts of anthropology in... Argentina, Brazil, China, Denmark, ..., Zambia or (New) Zealand, but we are sometimes left with a feeling of embarrassment as to how to bring them together. My aim in this paper is to outline a comparative framework that might serve to place the relationships between different national anthropologies within an international space. International space is not a given, but a product of a process of construction, and there are various forms of internationalization

1 I am grateful to Susana Narotzky and Gustavo Lins Ribeiro for their invitation to contribute this article for the WAN/RAM Journal. A first version of this paper was presented at the session "Difference And (In)Equality Within World Anthropologies", sponsored by the World Council of Anthropological Associations, at the 2007 AAA meeting, Washington DC. My travel was funded by my research center, IRIS (CNRS-EHESS-Inserm), Paris.

2 Ecole Normale Supérieure, and IRIS, Paris.

and internationalism³, which offer different opportunities and constraints. The attempt to propose a comparative framework has mostly an analytical purpose, but also a practical one, as what is at stakes is also to define what kind of internationalization we want to foster.

This paper draws on a collection I edited with Federico Neiburg and Lygia Sigaud (L'Estoile, Neiburg, Sigaud, 2005), as well as on my own work on the International African Institute in the interwar period and on my personal experience within the Executive Committee of EASA, where I have been serving as elected member since 2006.⁴

In order to understand the features of the international space, we need to identify some factors that define national specificities in anthropology, not because they were historically established prior to internationalization (this is often the reverse), but because they are the primary locus for the socialization of most anthropologists. I will then propose to look at the interests at play in internationalization and some of the forms it may take, in the past and today.

The International Space of National Anthropologies

Trying to account for the emergence and specialization of distinct national traditions within the international space of anthropology was a major focus of the comparative endeavor which led to *Empires, Nations and Natives. Anthropology and State-making*⁵. The specific form taken by anthropology in each national context is closely related with 1) the interactions between anthropology and state-building, in imperial or nation-state settings; 2) its place in the academic division of labour. I will analyse successively these two aspects.

3 I will speak of *internationalization* as a process, and of *internationalism* as a political and scientific ideal, involving the active promotion of internationalization.

4 I was encouraged to take responsibility in EASA by the late Eduardo Archetti, to whose memory I dedicate this contribution.

5 I draw freely here on the comparative chapter I co-authored with Neiburg and Sigaud, which elaborates these points further (2005b).

Relations between the production of anthropological knowledge and the process of state-building break up into three main components:

(a) the nature of the political units (nation-state/ imperial state) within which a national anthropological tradition develops and towards whose construction it contributes;

(b) the position occupied by each political unit within the international space and the transformations over time in the system of interdependence between states.

(c) the interplay between the emergence, maintenance and transformation of specific national anthropological traditions, and the international circulation of scientific theories and models for governing populations.

The expression 'national anthropologies,' as used for instance in the classic volume by Gerholm & Hannerz (1983), carries two distinct meanings: the adjective 'national' may refer a) to the distinction between nation-state and empire, or b) to the opposition between the national sphere and international space. George W. Stocking gave substance to the first meaning by contrasting 'nation-building' anthropologies with 'empire-building' anthropologies (1983: 172). For example, the determinant factor in British anthropology – the paradigm of an 'empire-building' anthropology – was "experience with dark-skinned 'others' in the overseas Empire," while the dominant feature in the anthropology produced in continental European countries was, by contrast, "the relation between national identity and internal 'otherness.'" Thus *national* anthropologies were confined to the study of groups living within the national territory, while *metropolitan* anthropologies embraced a far wider area.

Taken in its second sense, the term 'national anthropology' designates a discipline defined by its *local* character in contrast to an 'international anthropology,' *cosmopolitan* in nature, practiced by researchers from diverse backgrounds, whose center is today Anglo-American anthropology. Seen from the viewpoint of this center, national anthropologies frequently add up to little more than residual forms destined to dissolve into international anthropology.

The constant (and frequently implicit) slippage in the volume edited by Gerholm & Hannerz between the first and second sense has the side-effect of reinforcing a dichotomy which equates one pair of terms, 'national, and 'international,' with another, 'peripheral' and 'central.' There is an implicit hierarchy

here, constructed from the dominant position of the 'center' (Stocking's term) which associates the scaling of the opposed terms with the supposed theoretical sophistication or rusticity of an anthropological tradition. Thus national anthropologies are held to be more 'modest' in scale and content, than metropolitan ones, while the latter are in turn assumed to 'provide the largest contribution to so-called 'international anthropology.' In other words, 'metropolitan' comes to be equated with 'cosmopolitan' (i.e. 'modern'), while 'national' is heard as 'provincial' (i.e. 'backward'). Such a schema underlies most standard 'histories of anthropology'.⁶

One of the main challenges of our book was precisely to subvert the established dichotomy between national and imperial anthropologies by bringing together case studies drawn from a range of sites within and beyond the metropolises: Mexico or Brazil provided typical cases of "national" anthropologies, France, or Britain typical "imperial anthropologies", while Portugal, the US or South Africa offered hybrid cases which escaped easy pigeon-holing. Nation-building and empire-building appear, then, not as mutually exclusive categories, but rather as two poles in relation to which social configurations specifically located in time and space move closer or further away. Linking the transformations occurring within particular anthropological traditions with the history of interdependence between states avoid the pitfalls of essentializing 'center' and 'periphery'. Such a perspective suggests a perhaps predictable but nevertheless crucial pattern: there is a broad coincidence between the field of influence of a state and the field of study of its anthropologists. This led us to formulate an hypothesis: the more a state has the capacity to project itself abroad (be it in colonial or hegemonic form), the more its anthropologists will tend to undertake fieldwork beyond national borders⁷.

In that light, one can read the history of US anthropology as a case of a shift from a 'nation-centered' anthropology, focused

6 The definition of the 'center' varies according to the perspective. Thus in a recent account by the Max-Planck Institut at Halle, the German tradition is included in the "central traditions" together with the American (i.e. U.S), British and French ones (Barth , Gingrich, Parkin and Silverman, 2005).

7 Such a model could be refined by taking into account non-state forms of hegemony, such as the missionaries or the development programmes and NGOS. See Pantaléon, 2005 on this last point.

essentially (like Mexican or Brazilian anthropologies) on nation-building to an 'imperial' or 'metropolitan' anthropology, which progressively became global⁸, while providing in other ways a striking instance of what Gustavo Lins Ribeiro calls "metropolitan provincialism" (Neiburg & Goldman, 2005).

At the risk of overstating the case, there are signs that French anthropology – for a long time active not only in its colonial/post-colonial backyard in West Africa and the Pacific, but also in South and Central America, and prominent in international debates – might today be passing through a symmetrically inverse process of 're-nationalization' (Rogers 2001, 2002; de L'Estoile & Naepels, 2004). In parallel, the ever-increasing weight (in terms of both personnel and resources) of the North American and, more generally, English-speaking academic world, has tended to push French anthropology towards the margin of debates. While many researchers from Northern European countries write directly in English for the international academic market, most French anthropologists still tend to publish in their own national language as first choice despite the fact the latter no longer occupies the pre-eminent position it once held in international intellectual exchanges. France appears in a situation of a former central anthropology that contended for hegemony, rapidly being provincialized.

The 'national' anthropologies that developed in quite different ways within an imperial framework provide a further complexification: Portugal (Ribeiro Thomaz, 2005) is a case of "peripheric empire", while India (Beteille 2007), or South Africa (Kuper, 2005), could be characterised as "central peripheries" where anthropology developed early.⁹

The close relationship between a state's zone of influence and the study field of its anthropologists tells us much about the asymmetries existing between the various 'national traditions' in anthropology. Indeed, anthropologists from the USA study Mexico, but the reverse is generally not true. The sphere of activity of Mexican anthropologists is usually confined to areas thought

8 In 1919, the chairman of the U.S. National Research Council declared that anthropology should no longer be preoccupied with Native Americans, but should follow American interests overseas. (Vincent, 1990: 153).

9 The first post-graduate department of anthropology was established in the University of Calcutta in 1920, and the first professional journal devoted to the subject, *Man in India*, was started in 1921.

to be of strategic value to the Mexican state itself. Thus, even those who have undertaken field research in the United States have focused on Mexican immigrants (Lomnitz, 2005).

The relationship between anthropology and the state develop within a national context which itself never exists in isolation. The building of (national and imperial) states must be comprehended as a process which is simultaneously internal and external – in a situation of interdependence between political units which compete for status, prestige and markets. Even today, concern for national prestige and competition with other states in the study of native populations are a driving force in the support given by the state to anthropological institutions or museums.

I will just mention here briefly the second defining factor for anthropology at a national level: the place it occupies in the various systems of teaching and research, or, in other words, its relationship to neighbouring disciplines, which account for its size, its status, and the definition of the field. (Elias, 1983; Whitley, 1984)¹⁰. Thus, in France, anthropology has for long maintained close relationships with philosophy, and a significant number of well-known anthropologists were trained as philosophers¹¹. At the same time, it was almost completely separated from archaeology (associated with classics), and with relatively little input from history. In Mexico, by contrast, anthropology is closely associated with archaeology and history, as evidenced by the INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History) or the National School of Anthropology and History. The location of the discipline within academic institutions (universities, museums, research centers) is of course crucial.¹²

This place within the national academic field is usually internalized by scholars, first through training, and then through the nationally designed systems of evaluation and reward, and significantly defines the orientation of their research interests, or the set of theoretical and methodological tools they use.

10 The system of disciplines is itself constantly being reconfigured and redefined by the pressures of various demands, coming from the State, or, increasingly, from the market.

11 Durkheim, Mauss, Lévi-Strauss and Bourdieu are but the most famous instances of such a pattern, but at the *Ecole normale supérieure*, where I teach, it is still not uncommon for some young philosophers to experience a conversion to anthropology. For a recent appraisal, see Gaille-Nikodimov, 2004.

12 On the role of the museum in French anthropology, see L'Estoile (2003a, 2003b, 2007a).

The position of the discipline in the academic division of labour accounts for the various definitions of the field when one crosses borders, together with the already mentioned various types of relationship with state-building. Thus the international circulation of individual academics may entail disciplinary shifts: this is the case for Indian scholars who identify as sociologists in their home country but turn into anthropologists (of India) when they come to the United States (Béteille, 2007).

All these factors contribute to defining national spaces within which operates a “common language”, not only linguistically, but in the more general sense of a set of common assumptions and procedures. In that respect, the relative force of professional associations, that pursue the explicit aim to articulate at a national level potentially conflicting thematic and local interests, may be seen as both a symptom of, and a factor in, success in creating a common language.¹³

Interests in internationalization and the creation of a transnational space

The diversity of forms taken by anthropology at the national level results in the absence of any preestablished common sense in the international space. In other words, what is to be expected at the international level is not immediate mutual comprehension. Rather, misunderstandings are likely to arise between practitioners embedded in different national spaces who, moreover, usually meet on an unequal footing. So how is it possible to construct a transnational space out of these different national settings? What are the conditions of creating an understanding between anthropologists belonging to different worlds without adopting the standard language of hegemonic internationalization?

An historical approach to relations of interdependence allows us to analyze the processes involved in the international circulation of individuals, theories and political technologies, as well as the constitution of ‘national schools’ by looking both at the interests that support internationalization and those which

13 The very different role played by national associations in different countries is striking: thus the AAA or the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (ABA) are very strong in contrast to the very weak role played by rival associations in France or Italy. In France, the two more important associations organized in December 2007 a general meeting on the state of the discipline and work towards a kind of federation. See the website www.assisesethno.org.

tend to reinforce the national frame. Internationalization may provide opportunities, opening up the possibility of creating new alliances; yet it also represents for established 'national intellectuals' a potentially disruptive factor that may encroach upon their interpretative monopoly. One needs to pay closer attention to the uses of internationalism in specific contexts.

In many cases, internationalization is a strategy allowing to redress local situations of weakness by mobilising outside networks as allies. Such a pattern is apparent in the efforts to build an international space in African studies in the interwar period (L'Estoile, 2007b). The International Institute of African Languages and Cultures was founded in 1926 to be 'a coordinating agency, a central bureau and a clearing-house for information' between all those [mostly European] interested in Africa. There was a strong utopian component in a project that aimed at bringing together, just a few years after World War I, specialists in African languages and cultures from the various European countries¹⁴. It partook of the so-called "spirit of Geneva", as was then dubbed the cosmopolitan hope to overcome nationalist tensions in pacific dialogue which was expressed in the League of Nations (and ultimately frustrated). The journal of the Institute, *Africa*, featured articles in English, French, and German, as a sign of commitment to cosmopolitanism.

The creation of the IALC was indeed symptomatic of, and contributed to, the internationalisation of colonial debate in the inter-war period. One of the driving forces behind its creation was the attempt by influential American and British missionaries to build up an international network that would reinforce their position in their increasingly complex dealings with the various colonial powers in Africa, especially in the area of education¹⁵. This transnational strategy succeeded to a large extent.

14 Its chairman was British (the colonial pundit Lord Lugard), while its two directors, the colonial administrator and anthropologist Maurice Delafosse and the linguist Dietrich Westermann, were respectively French and German, and its General Secretary Swiss (Hannes Vischer).

15 The very creation of a body dedicated to furthering knowledge of African languages and cultures was also tightly linked to a wide-spread belief that a scientific approach to African problems would allow both missionaries and colonial officials to master a shifting colonial context and to overcome conflicts between various stakeholders in African matters, especially between rival colonial powers (L'Estoile 1997a, 1997b).

Efforts to establish an international forum for discussion in the sphere of African languages and cultures were however complicated not only by national rivalries in the colonial field, but also by dissent arising from scientists' divergent research programs, which in many cases came to be framed as national oppositions. Thus at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the IALC in 1933, the Belgian Professor De Jonghe proposed that international cooperation would be better if conceived of as an addition of nationally framed schemes: "I would ask that the programmes of study for each colony be presented by the English as regards English territories, by the French regarding French territories, and so forth for Italian, Belgian and Portuguese colonies. These national propositions would then be integrated in the international frame of the Institute."¹⁶

Not surprisingly, Malinowski objected to this, urging his colleagues 'not to lose sight of the fact that we are an International Institute'. Being himself a foreigner in Britain, enjoying considerable financial support from North American Foundations, attracting to his LSE seminar students from continental Europe and the British Commonwealth, Malinowski had everything to gain by endorsing internationalisation. Conversely, the nationalistic argument can be seen as a strategy his competitors in continental Europe invoked to counter a menacing hegemony. The same individuals could be playing a complex game, using in different contexts internationalism or nationalism as strategic resources. Henri Labouret was among those involved in such a complex strategy: in France, he used his position as one of the two Directors of the Institute to enhance his status as international expert, while within the Institute he played the nationalist card and his links to the French colonial administration.

Thus while the IALC did provide a forum for international debate, the increasing divergence between national developments in anthropology made international cooperation more difficult. The existence of an international forum not only did not prevent the formation of 'national schools' along quite different lines in Britain and France, but rather contributed to the construction of differences as being 'national' in character. Science is not an *a priori* 'universal' practice, but universalisation can only be established through the connection of a series of 'local practices'

16 Minutes of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures Meeting at Bruxelles, dated 4th July, 1933 (IAI 1/18), Archives of the International African Institute, British Library of Political and Economic Sciences, London. Original in French.

constituted in different settings. The contrasting developments in both academic and colonial contexts reflected in the discussions within the Institute over procedures to be followed in order to produce a knowledge of African populations recognized as 'scientific'.

The case of the IALC sustains the hypothesis that processes of internationalization are initiated and sustained by such factors as mobilization of international competition as an argument to obtain support at the national level, the international circulation of anthropologists trying to get the best exchange rate for the academic capital accumulated in other places, the importation from abroad of new theories or methods to gain space within the local game.

Hegemonic and pluralistic forms of internationalization

Internationalization is however too loose a term, as it refers to a variety of processes. To go beyond this, I shall introduce a distinction between two ideal-typical forms of internationalization and internationalism: hegemonic and pluralistic.

Hegemonic internationalization, is basically a result of the attraction by the more powerful center on its own terms. The international idiom, linguistically and intellectually, is the one of the hegemonic center. There is no need to expand much on what I mean by hegemonic internationalization. Thus the AAA is in fact both the U.S. National Association and *de facto* international, since it attracts scholars from all over the world, provided they accept to speak the local language¹⁷. More generally, anthropologists based in the American system (but from various origins) largely define the anthropological agenda worldwide.

Hegemonic internationalization is like gravity: it naturally attracts you towards the gravitational center, without your even realizing it. The default language, not only linguistically, but also intellectually, is the one of the center. In other words, whoever gets recognition in the center, sometimes for 'local' reasons, is mechanically attracting attention elsewhere. This does not mean that the center has a monopoly over intellectual innovation, but that it tends to become the place that distributes recognition: thus

17 The very fact that at the meeting where this paper was presented, our meeting ground was, in a literal sense, the meeting of the US National Association, and our common language English is a striking illustration of this phenomenon.

a Brazilian anthropologist will get recognition in Sweden only once she is recognized centrally; Indian scholars who emigrated to the US are better known in France than their teachers who stayed "at home". Such a mechanism is at work in many ways: when we think of texts for teaching, bibliography for our research, guest-speakers we want to invite, etc.¹⁸. This gravitational attraction ultimately entails a risk of uniformizing: internationalization would mean that the same references, the same fads, the same words, the same curricula spread all over the world. Such a standardization would of course facilitate the mobility of those who fully master the language of the center, but also greatly impoverish the intellectual content of the discipline¹⁹.

What I call pluralistic internationalism, by contrast, is an endeavour with a strong utopian component: it advocates a meeting ground where in principle all can meet on their own terms. In essence, it strives at creating a kind of non-hegemonic internationalization. In Europe, the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) is a typical instance of this pluralistic utopia, as was, in different ways, the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures.

These ideal-types are not watertight categories, but rather polarities which help us to clarify intermediate situations.

In the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, there was not one, but several competing hegemonic internationalisms, organized respectively around France, Britain, Germany, and increasingly the United States, each with its own "area of influence". This competition for hegemony between various players in fact insured some kind of pluralism by opening up a space for local strategies. For instance, in a country like Brazil, some actors chose at a certain point to play the French influence as an alternative to the North American one (Miceli, 1990). Thus young French philosophers were invited to teach Durkheimian

18 One of the main vectors that insure the reproduction of hegemony are the text-books or readers, which, whatever the intentions of their authors, eventually produce a selection of all the available texts, by creating a canon. Readers select a limited number of works which they define as 'central', and de facto contribute to make them canonical by making them easily available and reproducible.

19 This is largely what happened to a discipline as economics. Economists share a common language (English, formalization and a set of basic assumptions), which facilitates international circulation and also contributes to legitimizing their claims to scientificity.

sociology in Brazilian universities : Claude Lévi-Strauss, succeeded by Roger Bastide, at the young University of São Paulo, which led both of them to become anthropologists, eventually changing the field both in France, Brazil, and beyond. This diversity of models and international networks up to this day is in part reflected in the creativity of Brazilian anthropology, which, at its best, displays typical features of “provincial cosmopolitanism”, to use Lins Ribeiro’s apt characterization (2006).

More recently, European anthropologies that once competed for hegemony have been forced to seriously cut their claims down to size in the face of U.S. hegemony. The recognition of this relative weakening is of course one of the factors that made possible the founding of EASA. But the utopian component has been central.

Practical utopian experiments

I will finally mention two quite different experiences I have been involved in, attempting to translate pluralistic internationalism into practice.

EASA has been set up in 1989 partly following the realization of the fact that the place where European anthropologists were meeting, apart from specialists’ meetings or conferences, was indeed the AAA. This is of course very well so, but the founding idea of EASA was that it was useful to build up a meeting ground between representatives of various European traditions, where they could meet on their *own* terms (Archetti, 2003; Kuper, 2004). This has sometimes been misread as a sure symptom of Anti-Americanism. While a desire of resisting what was felt to be Americanization was certainly present among some of the founders²⁰, I believe its deep meaning is rather a commitment to pluralism.

In my view, the purpose of an association such as EASA is to create *meeting grounds*, both in the literal and metaphorical sense. The technologies of creating meeting grounds are both social and material: in our case, these are our bi-annual conferences, as our networks, electronic, our website (<http://www.easaonline.org/>), our thematic networks (Media anthropology, Africanist,

20 Adam Kuper’s call to a cosmopolitan anthropology is thus in part a reaction against ‘post-modern’ anthropology (Kuper, 1994).

Europeanist, etc) or in print, as our journal *Social Anthropology / Anthropologie sociale*²¹, and our publication series²².

The utopian component of what I call “pluralistic internationalism” encounters a number of difficulties, the first one being “linguistic” in a wide sense. One of the central problems is of course the issue of a common language. Misunderstandings frequently arise, because of the absence of a shared common sense, which cannot be assumed, but has to be built up. In cases of encounters between speakers of unequal languages, the speakers of the “weaker” language are at a structural disadvantage, having to express themselves in a foreign medium. To use a sports metaphor, they are always “visitors”, never the “home team”. Ideally, it would suppose that everyone is able to understand the other speaking in its own language. While I sympathize with the call for a more ‘heteroglossic’ anthropology (Lins Ribeiro, 2006)²³, I am aware that this utopia of an anthropological Pentecost that would overcome the Babelian linguistic dispersion can only materialize in very specific situations²⁴.

EASA has been set up as a tool to promote diversity and dialogue between non-hegemonic traditions (Galey, 1992). However, while a number of anthropologists in Europe do speak one or more European languages in addition to their own and English, English tends to become the default common language assuring major comprehension, even if it also creates very strong asymmetries between those who master it fluently and those who struggle to express themselves with this medium.

21 Thus the various review editors take pain to look for reviewers belonging to different traditions than the authors.

22 EASA enjoys the continuing support from the Wenner-Gren Foundation.

23 In my own personal utopia, everyone should speak at international meetings in a language other than his or her ‘own’, in order to distribute handicap more equally. This is of course quite impractical!

24 The closest I came to a linguistically polyphonic conference was a conference of art historians I attended last year, where people presented their papers and discussed them in the four supposedly most important languages in Art history, English, French, German, and Italian. I was in awe in front of our colleagues, but soon discovered that a number of French students did not bother to hear the papers in German, or that students from Scotland complained that too much French was spoken.

Not all European anthropologists are involved in EASA. The striking variation in the degree of interest in internationalization (or in this specific form of internationalization) could be accounted for by looking at both the place of each country within national space and the position of individuals within their own national space.

There is a marked discrepancy in this respect between those countries, mostly in Northern Europe, where most scholars already made the decision to publish primarily in English, and those where there are still strong incentives to publish in the national language (France, Italy, Spain, to some extent Germany). Intellectual debate in France is largely set up nationally. The tendency to publish in one's national language is reinforced by the existence of international networks which exist on a linguistic basis (France/Francophone Belgium and Switzerland, Quebec; Brazil/Portugal; Spain/Latin America) and create spaces that are both international and easily compatible with a national definition.

While translation programs should be developed²⁵, they of course tend also to reinforce the role of the *lingua franca* as instrument of communication, because it makes sense to maximize the effect of translation by translating to English rather than to any other language²⁶. Ideally, translations should be fostered not only from "peripheral" languages to English, but also between peripheral languages themselves; this, however, is in practice dependent on the existence of national programmes.²⁷

The utopian drive can actually change practices, as shown by an other experiment in international cooperation I had the opportunity to develop with colleagues and friends from the Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro. The specific existing institutional framework for French-Brazilian cooperation we used had been devised to support the development of post-graduate programmes in Brazil, so was fundamentally asymmetrical: French scholars came

25 We have such a translation programme at EASA, for which we receive a fund from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, and will soon publish two books in our Translation Series at Berghahn.

26 As we know as anthropologists, translation is not only a linguistic issue, but crucially involves an understanding of local contexts and situations (Malinowski, 1935).

27 Such as those maintained by the French government as part of its cultural policy to help translation of French works in various languages.

to Brazil to teach²⁸, while Brazilian academics and students came to France to learn. Starting from this, we set out to build up a symmetrical cooperation, which included not only mutual visits, but innovative forms of collective work including students and more senior scholars. Thus, when we organized in 1997 ago a joint conference in Rio de Janeiro, my Brazilian partners decided to go for a significant extra-cost to insure simultaneous translation, thus allowing everyone to express himself in French or Portuguese, as he or she chose. Such a solution cannot however work when more languages are involved.

This cooperation led to the formulation and implementation of common research programmes: we developed two sub-projects²⁹. One was comparative: by bringing together a series of reflexive/historical endeavours of various anthropologists in Brazil, France and beyond, each trying to reflect on his or her own practice as situated in a specific national space, we set out to elaborate a collective reflexivity based on comparison. It eventually culminated in the successive publication first of a special issue of an established journal in France, then a book in Brazil and finally a book in English (L'Estoile, Sigaud, Neiburg, 2000, 2003, 2005).

The second research axis was even bolder, since it involved researchers and students in a collective field research in the Nordeste. The confrontation in the field of viewpoints framed in diverse social and academic settings was highly productive, as it made apparent a number of implicit natiocentric expectations (L'Estoile & Sigaud, 2001, 2006)³⁰. This experiment resulted into publications and exhibitions in both France and Brazil³¹. This cooperation involved significant investments in trying to master

28 In the French foreign affairs jargon, they are called « missionnaires.

29 We received funds from various Brazilian and French institutions, including a significant grant by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

30 Due to the failure to find continuing funding for the French side of the research team, and the pressure of other works, most French participants, except me, have since gone into other projects. We were also unable to organize a symmetrical common fieldwork in France, as had been our initial dream.

31 *Lonas e bandeiras em terras pernambucanas*, Exhibition at the Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, 2002 (<http://www.lonasebandeiras.com.br/index.htm>). Nous sommes devenus des personnes. Nouveaux visages du Nordeste brésilien, exhibition at the Ecole normale

the language of the other and translating, but it allowed us to create mutual understanding.

Conclusion: translating utopia into practice

Ritually calling for internationalization without looking at the way it works on the ground is not very helpful. We need a comparative framework that allows us to better understand the mutually structuring relationships between national and international space in anthropology. The ideal-typical distinction between two polar configurations of internationalization, hegemonic and pluralistic, may help to clarify the way international space is configured.

The attraction of hegemonic internationalization cannot be escaped only by goodwill. The inescapable fact that today's internationalism speaks English is the result both of the legacy of the British Empire, and of US imperial hegemony today. This is not to be changed, and I write this of course in English, but concern with translation in the broad sense of the term is to be central.

Pluralistic internationalism, with its utopian component, is thus a necessary counterpart to this hegemonic gravity. Intellectual diversity has to be fostered against the risk of uniformity. In many ways, however, pluralistic internationalization is much more difficult to achieve than the juxtaposition of national differences of hegemonic internationalization, because it involves ideally both the respect for local specificities and the creation of a *common ground* where a more equal exchange may take place. To achieve this, meeting grounds and forums of discussion have to be so devised as to favour communication over barriers that are not only linguistic, but also cultural, economic and social. In fact, translating utopia into practice involves a form of intellectual activism which demands great effort, while it is much easier to follow routine procedures.

The purpose of transnational organization such as EASA or WAN/RAM is to create some basic conditions that allow for the building up of a more pluralistic form of internationalization. The ultimate aim is not the creation of a standard language, but rather of a series of *meeting grounds* and translation devices. Fostering meeting grounds and enhancing translation does not by itself insure a more pluralistic international communication, but

supérieure, Paris, 2003 (<http://www.diffusion.ens.fr/bresil/index.html>).

it opens up a space where this utopian drive of mutual understanding may find a possibility of, at least partial, realization.

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